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ABSTRACT

A qualitative case study approach with individual and focus group interviews identified senior enlisted Army soldiers' primary motivations and perceived barriers to postsecondary education participation. The 92 interviewees shared these common characteristics: they were enlisted soldiers, were older, attended college part time, worked full time, possessed a high school diploma or equivalent, had completed an associate degree, and were near retirement and a career transition. Nonparticipants (defined as soldiers who had not taken a college course in the last five years and who were not pursuing a Bachelors degree) named these two primary factors as having the most impact on motivation to participate in college: interest in subject and desire to learn a specific skill. Participants named these two factors: desire to obtain a credential and desire for enhanced self efficacy. Nonparticipants named these two factors as perceived barriers to participation: lack of interest and lack of course offerings. Participants named these two barriers: type of unit assignment and unsupportive supervisor. Conclusions were that active participants were motivated by a sense of investing in their human capital; the Army installation's educational directives, policies, and practices toward postsecondary education opportunities varied across commands and individual units due to different organizational cultures and individual leaders' values; information dissemination about learning activities was lacking and counseling services were disjointed or nonexistent; and participants' primary motivation was the need to obtain a credential. (21 references) (YLB)

Counseling Adult Learners for New Careers: The Motivations and Barriers Associated with Postsecondary Educational Participation of Soldiers in Transition

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The following is a description of senior enlisted Army soldiers' primary motivational orientations and perceived barriers toward postsecondary educational participation. This article contributes to our awareness of the needs for advanced thinking about education for those adult learners who confront career and life transitions. The findings from this study suggest that this subgroup of nontraditional students experience unique circumstances that have implications for the types of learning opportunities available and impact other initiatives that best prepare individuals for a second career. Based on the soldiers' worldviews who participated in this study, five recommendations are made on how Army leaders, education and career counselors, and higher education can support healthy transformations for soldiers leaving the force and preparing for post-military careers.

KEY WORDS: nontraditional students; adult learners; career counseling; life transitions; educational motivation and deterrent theories

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**COUNSELING ADULT LEARNERS FOR NEW CAREERS: THE MOTIVATIONS
AND BARRIERS ASSOCIATED WITH POSTSECONDARY EDUCATIONAL
PARTICIPATION OF SOLDIERS IN TRANSITION**

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INTRODUCTION

Surveys administered to incoming and departing soldiers reveal educational opportunities as being significant in their decision to remain in or leave the Army (Kimmel, Nogami, Elig, & Gade, 1986). While Army leaders express the need and desire for an educated workforce (USDA, 1993), identifying the impact of current educational programs, policies, and services have on senior enlisted soldiers' abilities to participate in postsecondary educational offerings has received little attention. In addition, the changing global economy requires continued learning and retraining for adults to function and remain competitive in the workforce (Valentine, 1997). This fact is especially relevant for senior noncommissioned officers nearing retirement and preparing for a career transition.

RESEARCH METHODS

I interviewed a total of 92 soldiers at one Army installation. A qualitative case study approach with both individual and focus group interviews was used to identify and compare the characteristics attributable to senior enlisted soldiers who participated in postsecondary educational offerings to those who did not participate, and to find out what factors impede participation for both groups. I defined both participants/nonparticipants as those soldiers who had attained an Associate degree or commensurate credit hours. Participants/nonparticipants were then further delineated as those soldiers who had/had not taken a college course in the past 5 years and were/were not pursuing a Bachelor degree. All interviewees shared common characteristics: (a) they were enlisted soldiers, (b) they were older, (c) they attended college part

time, (d) they worked full time, (e) they possessed a high school diploma or equivalent, (f) they had completed an Associate degree, and (g) they were near retirement and a career transition.

Nonparticipants/Participants' Motivational Orientations and Factors That Influenced Participation

The two primary factors named by interviewees categorized as nonparticipants as having the most impact on their motivations to participate in college were the *Interest in Subject* and the *Learn a Specific Skill* variables. The two factors named by participants were the *Obtain a Credential* and the *Enhanced Self-Efficacy* reasons.

The Interest in Subject Category

In this study 13 nonparticipants expressed that their individual motivational orientations toward postsecondary educational opportunities were affected most by course offerings that were of interest. Whereas 15 nonparticipants listed deterrents/barriers to participation that were consistent with a *lack of interest* toward college in general, the motivational orientations of the above subgroup of nonparticipants suggest that past and future inclinations to participate are high when the subject matter is of personal interest (e.g., zoology, welding, and woodworking). When compared to the categories developed from past research efforts, the *Interest in Subject* category identified from this study's data most closely relates to the *questionable worth*, *relevance*, or *quality of educational opportunities* factors identified by Scanlan (1986).

The Learn a Specific Skill Category

The second factor that influenced whether nonparticipants elected to enroll in formal, for-credit college courses was the desire to *Learn a Specific Skill*. Eleven nonparticipants from the

individual and focus group interviews expressed that this factor had the most impact on their past and future inclinations to participate in college offerings. I developed this category from responses that contained expressions about specific courses that led to certifications and licensures. For example, some soldiers indicated that their decisions to participate in postsecondary educational opportunities were based solely on individual course offerings that were of specific interest, such as an introductory course in zoology. In such cases, I coded soldiers' reasons for participation in the *Interest in Subject* category. The *Learn a Specific Skill* category was conceived based on soldiers' sentiments that contained elements associated with alternative educational programs, such as learning about automobile or computer repair. When compared to the categories developed from past research efforts regarding military populations, none of the factors in the literature directly relate to the *Learn a Specific Skill* category identified from this study's data. The two factors did not constitute a primary reason that influenced the motivational orientations of soldiers who were categorized as participants.

The Obtain a Credential Category

A total of 14 soldiers categorized as participants from the individual and focus group interviews stated that a desire to *Obtain a Credential* had a positive impact on past and current decisions to participate in postsecondary educational opportunities. I developed the *Obtain a Credential* category based on soldiers' sentiments that contained elements associated with traditional notions about postsecondary education, such as the attainment of an Associate's or Bachelor's degree. Whereas the *Obtain a Credential* reason was the primary factor for interviewees categorized as participants, only 4 nonparticipants indicated that obtaining a credential was a primary consideration that had a positive effect on their decisions to participate in

postsecondary educational opportunities. When compared to the factors developed from past research efforts, the *Obtain a Credential* category conceived from this study's data most closely relates to the pragmatic reasons of *job advancement* and *promotion* identified by Murphy (1977) and Meinhardt (1979).

The Enhanced Self-Efficacy Category

The second factor that influenced participants to enroll in formal, for-credit, college courses was the *Enhanced Self-Efficacy* that resulted from participation. A total of 12 soldiers' primary reasons for postsecondary educational participation were consistent with a desire to gain an enhanced sense of self-efficacy. Bandura (1977) defined self-efficacy as an individuals' personal assessment of his or her abilities to accomplish a specific task. I conceived this category as the process whereby soldiers choose to participate in postsecondary educational opportunities and persevere even when confronted with barriers and deterrents to participation. None of the 45 nonparticipants indicated this reason as a factor that impacted their motivational orientations toward postsecondary educational opportunities. When compared to the categories developed from past research efforts of military populations, none of the factors in the literature directly relate to the *Enhanced Self-Efficacy* category identified from this study's data.

Nonparticipants/Participants' Barriers/Deterrents to Participation

The two factors named by nonparticipants as having the most impact on their perceived barriers to participation were the *Lack of Interest* and the *Lack of Course Offerings* reasons. The two factors named by participants as being the greatest obstacles to participation in

postsecondary educational opportunities were the *Type of Unit Assignment* and the *Unsupportive Supervisor* categories.

The Lack of Interest Category

A total of 15 nonparticipants from the individual and focus group interviews stated that a *Lack of Interest* in college in general was a primary reason for not participating in college offerings. Ten of the 15 nonparticipant interviewees who stated this factor as an inhibitor to participation also named either the *Learn a Specific Skill* or the *Interest in Subject* reasons as a primary positive influence on past decisions to participate. As opposed to the *Interest in Subject* conceptual category, whereby interviewees' indicated that specific courses of personal interest served as a motivator for participation, I derived the *Lack of Interest* category from soldiers' statements that college participation was a low priority or even unnecessary. The *Lack of Interest* category was not a primary reason given by participants as a factor that impeded their ability to participate in postsecondary educational opportunities. When compared to Scanlan's (1986) synthesis of past research findings, the *Lack of Interest* category identified from this study's data most closely relates to *negative educational perceptions* and the *apathy or lack of motivation* factors.

The Lack of Course Offerings Factor

The second factor that impeded nonparticipants' abilities to participate in postsecondary educational opportunities was a *Lack of Course Offerings*. In this study, more than double the number of soldiers (12) who were nonparticipants suggested that the unavailability of specific college courses deterred participation, as compared to 5 participants who listed this reason as a

primary barrier. When compared to Scanlan's (1986) synthesis of past research findings, the *Lack of Course Offerings* category identified from this study's data most closely relates to the *incompatibilities of time and/or place* factor. While 5 participants mentioned that the *Lack of Course Offerings* created a barrier to participation, none of the soldiers categorized as participants listed the *Lack of Interest* factor as a primary deterrent to participating in postsecondary educational opportunities.

The Type of Unit Assignment Category

A total of 17 participants from the individual and focus group interviews stated that the *Type of Unit Assignment* factor was the greatest deterrent/barrier to college participation. Of the 13 conceptual categories developed from the data, the *Type of Unit Assignment* reason had the highest percentage (85%) of respondents who named this factor as having a primary influence on their motivational orientations and perceived barriers to college participation when accounting for soldiers' current unit assignments. Specifically, 13 of 20 soldiers assigned to field units at Fort Military (a pseudonym for the actual army installation at which the present study was conducted) named this variable as their primary obstacle to participation. Soldiers' responses that were coded and designated to the *Type of Unit Assignment* category were based on the characteristics associated with various Army units. For example, some military occupational specialties (MOSs) are associated with tactical or "field" units, while others are categorized as strategic or "garrison" units. Soldiers with job specialties that assign them to the former are more inclined to be deployed and to experience unpredictable work hours. Soldiers with garrison MOSs have more predictable work hours where deployments and field training

exercises are limited. Therefore, the opportunity to enroll in college courses during off-duty time is partially dependent upon a soldier's job. For some, opportunities are abundant, while others are unable to participate due to deployments and training exercises.

The *Type of Unit Assignment* category was a factor named by interviewees as having both positive and negative influence on college participation. Specifically, 3 interviewees categorized as nonparticipants and 4 interviewees categorized as participants expressed that assignments to field and garrison units had the greatest impact on their motivational orientations toward postsecondary educational opportunities. However, 17 participants expressed that assignment to specific types of field units was the primary deterrent/barrier to their participation in college courses. Only 2 of the 45 soldiers categorized as nonparticipants gave primary reasons for barriers/deterrents to participation that were coded as the *Type of Unit Assignment* category. When compared to the categories developed from past research efforts, the *Type of Unit Assignment* category identified from this study's data most closely relate to Brown's (1993) *participative/nonparticipative units* category.

The Supportive/Unsupportive Supervisors Category

Another factor that impeded participants' abilities to participate in postsecondary educational opportunities was *Unsupportive Supervisors*. The soldiers' narratives suggest that the *Type of Unit Assignment* and the *Supportive/Unsupportive Supervisors* are closely aligned. For example, the data from the individual and focus group interviews revealed that soldiers categorized as participants were able to overcome the *Type of Unit Assignment* variable when assigned to field units when a *Supportive Supervisor* was present. As I note in the previous

section, thirteen noncommissioned officers indicated that their primary obstacle to participation was assignment to tactical or field units. However, 9 of these soldiers provided examples in which they were able to overcome this obstacle when supportive supervisors facilitated continued college participation. In this study, the *Supportive/Unsupportive Supervisors* category was named as a primary reason by interviewees as having both positive and negative influence on college participation. Specifically, the category *Unsupportive Supervisors* was the second- and fourth-rated reason for barriers/deterrents to participation as stated by interviewees categorized as participants and nonparticipants, respectively. Twelve out of 47 participants suggested that unsupportive supervisors were deterrents to past postsecondary educational opportunities, while 5 of 45 nonparticipants gave this reason as their primary barrier to college participation. Five soldiers (participants) who were currently enrolled in college courses named *Supportive Supervisors* as a positive factor in response to the interview questions about motivational orientations toward college. When compared to the categories developed from past research efforts of military populations, the *Unsupportive Supervisors* category identified from this study's data most closely related to the *lack of encouragement* and the *influence of a significant other* categories noted by researchers Martindale and Drake (1989) and Meinhardt (1979), respectively.

DISCUSSION

The three major themes that emerged from the observations and document analysis portions of the research study were: (a) Although the education center at Fort Military had written directives in place for in-processing procedures, soldiers' experiences and the researcher's personal observations revealed that the educational counseling services were

disjointed and, at times, nonexistent, (b) The educational directives, policies, and practices regarding postsecondary educational opportunities were different across commands and individual units at Fort Military, dependent on the organization's culture and its leaders' values, and (c) A cornucopia of learning opportunities was available to senior noncommissioned officers at Fort Military. However, only those soldiers who were familiar with how to navigate the educational process were aware of all the offerings and services that were present.

Participants'/Nonparticipants' Characteristics

The first research question was: *What are the characteristics of participating adult learners that differentiate them from nonparticipants?* The picture that emerges from the data collected for this study is that participants' motivations for college participation are directed by an economic or investment premise, as outlined by Dhanidina and Griffith (1975). Soldiers in this study who were active participants were motivated by a sense of investing in one's human capital (Scanlan, 1986). For this group of soldiers, the perceived benefits of obtaining a credential (e.g., job promotion, acquisition of new knowledge, preparation for a new career) outweighed the costs (e.g., tuition, time, and transportation).

All soldiers who were interviewed for this study were nearing a career transition. Researchers Knox and Videbeck (1963) and Schlossberg et al. (1995) have demonstrated that this force (changes in life circumstances) positively affects participatory responses. The data collected from soldiers categorized as participants confirms the close relationship between life changes and participatory behavior (Aslanian & Brickell, 1980). However, as Merriam and Caffarella (1999) noted, the act of participation/nonparticipation involves a complex set of

action/inaction by an individual based on different factors and variables. Similar to expectancy valence theory (Rubenson, 1977), nonparticipants in this study expressed sentiments that reflected their beliefs that participation in formal, for-credit college offerings was neither a significant individual goal nor an act that necessarily leads to a substantial reward (Scanlan, 1986). Nonparticipants were more inclined to participate in a learning opportunity when the subject was of personal interest or to learn a specific skill that did not require a traditional college degree. As opposed to participants, nonparticipants revealed that situational variables such as a change in career or life circumstances had little effect on their decisions to participate/not participate in postsecondary educational opportunities.

Therefore, the data that answered the study's first research question partially supports Cross's (1981) claims that "the more education people have, the more interested they will be in further education, the more they will know about available opportunities, and the more they will participate" (p. 55). As researchers Carp, Peterson, and Roelfs (1974) and Johnstone and Rivera (1965) have suggested, education attainment levels are the most influential variable for predicting adults' future participation in formal learning activities. However, both groups in this study had attained Associate degrees. The soldiers categorized as participants continued to be engaged in formal educational opportunities, while the soldiers categorized as nonparticipants had not taken a college course in the past 5 years. An analysis of the demographic variables (gender, marital status, and race) with the nondemographic factors (career transitions and attitudes about college participation) incorporated into this study's research design revealed no significant correlations, with the exceptions of gender and the type of unit assignment.

Almost 80% of the nonparticipants who listed either *Interest in Subject* or *Learn a Specific Skill* as their primary reason for participating in postsecondary educational opportunities were male soldiers. Over 80% of participants who listed the *Enhanced Self-Efficacy* factor as their primary reason for participating in college offerings were female soldiers. The *Type of Unit Assignment* variable had the highest percentage (85%) of respondents who named this factor as having a primary influence on their motivational orientations and perceived barriers to college participation when factoring the soldiers' current unit assignment. For some soldiers, learning is addictive and supports the research mentioned above. For others, the act of nonparticipation is a multidimensional process that is affected by both individual and environmental factors. (Cross, 1981).

Fort Military's Effect on Soldier Participation/Nonparticipation

The second research question was: *How does the military setting affect the types of learning opportunities available or present barriers to participation for this specific population?* The picture that emerges from the data collected for this study is that the Fort Military's educational directives, policies, and practices toward postsecondary educational opportunities were different across commands and individual units, due to different organizational cultures and individual leaders' values. Participants named the *Type of Unit Assignment* as the primary factor that impeded their abilities to participate. However, consistent with Murphy's (1977) and Meinhardt's (1979) findings that suggest that the influence of a significant other greatly impacts individuals' perceptions about deterrents to participation, the data from participants revealed that they were able to overcome the *Type of Unit Assignment* barrier to participation when company

commanders, first sergeants, and other immediate supervisors facilitated their college-going opportunities. Some supervisors at Fort Military encouraged and facilitated soldiers' participation in college offerings. These *supportive supervisors* had a positive effect on the military setting and the types of learning opportunities available for soldiers categorized as participants. Other soldiers provided examples whereby *unsupportive supervisors'* actions had a negative effect on their ability to participate in postsecondary educational opportunities.

The Provision of Learning Opportunities for Senior Enlisted Soldiers

The third research question was: *What is the gap between the stated educational policies and reality in the provision of formal learning opportunities for career soldiers in transition?*

The picture that emerges from the data collected for this study is that Fort Military offered a wide variety of educational opportunities for soldiers. However, as other researchers have noted and as the data from this study suggests, not all adult learners are motivated to participate in formal, for-credit college and university courses. The data from the individual and focus group interviews indicate that dissemination of information about other types of learning activities at Fort Military was lacking. Observations and soldiers' sentiments about the education center's in-processing briefings revealed that the counseling services were disjointed and, at times, nonexistent. In addition to soldiers naming the lack of institutional support from their chain of command as a major deterrent to participation, the data from nonparticipants illustrate that these soldiers' frustrations centered on their inability to enroll in classes that were of a personal interest or to learn a specific skill.

Soldiers in Transition: A Profile of Participants

The fourth research question was: *Who takes advantage of these opportunities, why, and how are these opportunities limited?* The picture that emerges from the data collected for this study is that participants' primary motivation for participation was directed by their need to obtain a credential. All soldiers who were interviewed for this study were nearing a career transition. The life transitions variable weighed heavily in participants' decisions to participate. The data collected from the nonparticipants of the individual and focus group interviews suggest that an upcoming career change and life transition was not a factor that induced participation. For a clear majority of female soldiers categorized as participants, a primary motivation was based on the acquired sense of self-efficacy that resulted from their participation in postsecondary educational opportunities. For nonparticipants, the two primary motivations for college participation were enrolling in college classes when a particular subject was of personal interest or when there was an individual desire to learn a specific skill. This finding is consistent with Boshier's (1979) suggestion that reasons for participation must be congruent with the dominant needs of the individual. Another theme that emerged from the data suggests that nonparticipants were more inclined to participate in traditional college offerings when such courses were available in nontraditional ways. Numerous nonparticipants articulated that their learning preferences were better served by distant education or computer-assisted instruction.

In addition to the identification of the impact of life transitions on participants/nonparticipants' motivational orientations and perceived barriers/deterrents to participation, this study's research design included inquiries about the aspects associated with first-generation college students. This variable did not show a significant correlation between

soldiers categorized as participants/nonparticipants and the act of college participation/nonparticipation. Both participants and nonparticipants held common experiences in relation to their parents' perspectives about postsecondary education. While participants and nonparticipants shared how their parents' perspectives toward college were ones of indifference, the majority of soldiers assigned their earlier nonparticipation to a lack of maturity.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1. Emphasize the various learning opportunities available for adult learners who elect not to participate in postsecondary educational programs. As the data suggest, not all senior enlisted personnel are inclined to participate in what Cross (1981) termed "adult learning for academic credit." A key finding from the data of nonparticipants is that their motivational orientations were influenced by a desire to participate in other types of "organized learning activities" (Cross, 1981) that lead to nontraditional credentials, certificates, and licenses in preparation for a postmilitary job. At the same time, education and transition counselors can improve the learning opportunities for nonparticipants by identifying soldiers' unique learning needs and directing them to the types of nontraditional programs available at military installations and the surrounding communities.

Recommendation 2. Ensure that colleges and universities operating at Army installations have course transfer policies that are sensitive to the unique circumstances of this highly mobile group of students. The data collected for this study suggest that soldiers experience difficulties in completing their Associate and Bachelor degrees as they move from station to station throughout their careers. Soldiers' frustrations can be attributed to (a) the ambiguous transfer

policies of college credits between institutions, (b) the unavailability of the soldiers' "home" college or university at other military locations, and (c) the lack of counseling services that assist soldiers to identify college offerings that meet the course requirements of their degree plans. Soldiers who were participants explained how they were able to overcome these obstacles to participation; others expressed their frustrations in the unavailability of required courses and/or taking college classes that were not transferable.

Recommendation 3. Refine the current personnel management system so that enlisted soldiers with tactical military occupations are not relegated solely to field assignments, where postsecondary educational opportunities are often limited. Army soldiers face numerous obstacles throughout their careers that make it difficult to participate in postsecondary educational opportunities. For those who do participate, such as the soldiers interviewed for this study, certain barriers also make it difficult to complete a college or university degree program: frequent moves from installation to installation, unpredictable work schedules, field training exercises and deployments, unsupportive supervisors, rigid school residency requirements, the variation among postsecondary institutions in accepting transfer credits, and the refusal of some colleges and universities to grant credit for military training and experience.

An additional barrier to participation for senior enlisted soldiers is the type of unit assignment. This factor was named by interviewees categorized as participants as being the biggest obstacle to overcome in pursuing postsecondary educational opportunities. A key recommendation made by both participants and nonparticipants is that the Army's personnel management system be more attuned to the types of installations to which soldiers are assigned throughout their careers. The data from this study suggest that some senior enlisted soldiers have

been relegated solely to tactical or field assignments where postsecondary educational participation was limited. A personnel management system that considers the *Type of Unit Assignment* factor in soldier assignment decisions could provide more equitable educational opportunities for the types of soldiers who participated in this study.

Recommendation 4. Administer personality-type inventories to determine whether there is a nexus between certain individual characteristics and the act of postsecondary participation/nonparticipation. The findings from this study suggest that future research efforts in this area continue to use theories in combination as a research strategy and design. This study's research questions were designed to identify what factors affected soldiers' motivational orientations and perceived barriers toward college participation/nonparticipation. One variable that was not incorporated into this study's research design but that would be beneficial for future research efforts is the identification of the soldiers' personality types. The Meyers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) is a test designed to measure how people use perception and judgment in their decision-making processes (Meyers, 1980). Future research efforts should incorporate inventories such as the MBTI to determine whether there is a nexus between certain personality types and the act of postsecondary participation/nonparticipation.

The U.S. Army currently administers the MBTI to both enlisted and commissioned officers at different points in soldiers' careers to include advanced professional development schools and occupational-specific courses. These efforts have been fragmented and have not led to any type of accessible database from which researchers can draw valuable information. Administering the MBTI when soldiers first enter the service would allow for the creation of a

central database from which researchers could draw pertinent information and incorporate these data into future research efforts with little cost to the researcher or the Army.

Recommendation 5. Conduct cross-sectional and longitude studies of enlisted soldiers situated in similar environmental conditions to determine what factors have the greatest impact on motivational orientations and perceived barriers to college participation/nonparticipation across the life cycle. This study focused on the attitudes of senior enlisted soldiers toward postsecondary educational opportunities as they neared a career transition. The findings revealed that their attitudes toward college had changed throughout their careers. Future studies that compare the reasons for participation/nonparticipation by enlisted soldiers at the start of their military careers with the factors identified in this study would provide researchers with a number of possible research designs and strategies that are more holistic.

Cross-sectional longitudinal research is a type of investigation in which changes in a population over time are measured at a specific point in time from samples that vary in age and life experiences (Gall et al., 1996). Because enlisted soldiers share certain characteristics and socialization processes as well as similar environments, this cross-sectional analysis would provide researchers with a baseline for identifying the ways in which the various motivational and deterrent factors interact with the life cycle. In turn, a complete understanding of the process of college participation/nonparticipation and the factors that contribute to soldiers' attitudes about postsecondary education over time is difficult without longitudinal studies (e.g., studies that follow the same group of soldiers from the first year of military service through the end of their contractual obligations).

CONCLUSION

The goal of this article has been determine if the low participation rates for nontraditional students in transition are due solely to the Army's unique characteristics (e.g., sporadic deployments, geographical relocations, unpredictable work hours) or other contributing variables (e.g., lack of financial resources, individuals' motivational orientations, institutional commitment and support from leaders at the local level) in creating lifelong learning climates. To be sure, not all soldiers desire to participate in higher education. Nevertheless, adult learners who were interviewed for this study all expressed an interest in some type of learning activity. The Army's leadership can improve the current state of postsecondary educational opportunities for participants by the articulation and enforcement of Department of Defense educational policies and directives already in place. At the same time, education, career and transition counselors can improve the learning opportunities for nonparticipants by identifying soldiers' unique learning needs and directing them to the types of available nontraditional programs. Finally, leaders can enhance senior enlisted soldiers' participation in postsecondary education by restructuring the current management system so that all soldiers are afforded more opportunities to attend college at different points in their career. In turn, these recommendations will (a) support the Army's current recruitment, retention, and sustainment goals; (b) enhance soldiers' military effectiveness and help them to realize their educational, vocational, and other career goals; and (c) better prepare soldiers for their transition from the Army after 20 or more years of service.

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